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United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Office of  
Public Affairs

# **Selected Speeches and News Releases**

**September 5 - September 11, 1991**

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# Statement

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U.S. Department of Agriculture • Office of Public Affairs

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by Secretary of Agriculture, Edward Madigan, on the National School Lunch Program, Sept. 11.

I have chosen to respond to the concerns of Ellen Haas because I share those concerns. For many years I served on the Commerce sub-committee dealing with health and nutrition, and I believe that there is a strong relationship between good nutrition and good health.

In the 1990 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, USDA strongly recommend that people—adults and children over the age of two—limit their intake of calories from fat to no more than 30 percent of their diet and that they further distinguish between saturated fat and unsaturated fat. This represents a significant educational challenge for the country and for us.

We are working to achieve that goal through a series of efforts designed to educate parents, children, educators and the food service personnel in the school lunch program.

For example, the Nutrition Guidance for the Child Nutrition Programs—a spinoff of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans—will be made available for the first time to more than 90,000 schools next spring. Developed with the help of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, it provides food service employees with the information they need on nutrition to ensure that school lunches meet the goals set in the Dietary Guidelines. Many other technical nutritional information publications are provided to school food service personnel. In addition, the Food Service Management Institute, designed to increase training resources for food service managers, opened last year in Mississippi.

In school after school—at all levels—where the real work gets done by food service professionals—we are seeing more and more attention being given to what children eat. To encourage this USDA's Food and Nutrition Service is in the middle of a three-year grant program that is testing several menu modification concepts to lower fat, salt and sugar content in lunches.

While USDA makes more than 60 commodities available, only 20 percent of the foods that go into the National School Lunch Program are

USDA commodity foods. The rest of the food is purchased locally by school food service authorities. We have changed specifications for USDA commodities to reduce fat, salt and sugar content.

We tested four different types of low-fat beef hamburger patties in six states last spring, and the comments coming back from the schools were very favorable. As a result USDA will be purchasing low-fat beef patties for the School Lunch Program this year. How much will depend upon how much the meat industry can supply.

Poultry products such as low-fat ground turkey with 11 percent fat content are also being made available to schools. More fresh fruit and vegetables are appearing on menus. And fish nuggets and tuna are more readily available and in demand than before because of their low fat content.

I can assure you that by FY 1994 all food service personnel in the United States will have the tools and the training they need to improve the school lunch program to meet the dietary guidelines.

- We will provide in FY 1993 50 percent funding increase over 1992 levels for the Nutrition Education Training Program which provides nutrition education for school food service workers and students.
- Video tapes for all school districts that can be used for training local workers.
- New menu guides for 90,000 schools.
- We do not need additional administrative funds to do this but will redirect our current efforts to make nutritious school meals our highest priority.

Beyond that it will require parents and local communities to take that knowledge and turn it into action.

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# News Releases

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## **USDA ALABAMA A&M AGREEMENT WILL EXPAND A&M'S FORESTRY PROGRAMS AND ENROLLMENT**

HUNTSVILLE, Ala., Sept. 5—Alabama A&M University and the U.S. Department of Agriculture today signed an agreement enabling USDA's Forest Service to provide up to \$1 million annually in scholarships, internships and technical training for the university's forestry majors.

Alabama A&M is one of 17 historically black 1890 land-grant colleges and universities. Today's agreement is the latest step in USDA's continuing efforts to strengthen relationships with these institutions.

Associate Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Charles Hilty said the agreement supports USDA's goal of attracting more minority students to the fields of agriculture and forestry, and to employment opportunities with USDA's Forest Service and other agencies.

"We can achieve our goal only through Alabama A&M and other universities enrolling talented students and then providing them with first-rate education and experience," Hilty said. "These funds, and the program they support, can help do just that. USDA is very pleased to be able to provide them."

Dr. James W. Shuford, dean of Alabama A&M's School of Agriculture and Home Economics, said the funds will allow more than a tripling of the university's enrollment of forestry and related majors from the current 30 students to an estimated 110 by 1995.

Under the cooperative education program established by the agreement, participating students will work paid summer internships at Forest Service research stations, and receive annual stipends to help pay tuition and other educational expenses. All students who graduate in good standing and successfully complete internships under the program will receive job offers for permanent employment with the Forest Service.

The agreement will be administered for the Forest Service by Hoyt Abney, Assistant Director at the Southeastern Forest Experiment Station in Asheville, N.C.

Some of the students in the program will be selected from a preforestry program currently under development at the Shenck Civilian Conservation

Center at the Pisgah National Forest in North Carolina, and a pre-college apprenticeship program already underway at Alabama A&M.

“The expanded forestry program will enhance A&M’s ability to recruit outstanding students in forestry and related sciences, and help us build a forestry program as excellent as any in the country,” Shuford said.

Shuford and Hilte participated in a signing ceremony formalizing the agreement today on the A&M campus. Other officials who participated in the signing are Alabama A&M President Alan Keyes, Forest Service Chief F. Dale Robertson and Forest Service Deputy Chief for Administration J Lamar Beasley.

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## **USDA ANNOUNCES PREVAILING WORLD MARKET PRICE AND USER MARKETING CERTIFICATE PAYMENT RATE FOR UPLAND COTTON**

WASHINGTON, Sept. 5—Keith Bjerke, executive vice president of USDA’s Commodity Credit Corporation, today announced the prevailing world market price, adjusted to U.S. quality and location (adjusted world price), for Strict Low Middling (SLM) 1-1/16 inch (micronaire 3.5-3.6 and 4.3-4.9, strength 24-25 grams per tex) upland cotton (base quality), the coarse count adjustment and the user marketing certificate payment rate in effect from 12:01 a.m. Friday, Sept. 6, through midnight Thursday, Sept. 12.

The Agricultural Act of 1949, as amended, provides that the adjusted world price (AWP) may be further adjusted if: (a) the AWP is less than 115 percent of the current crop year loan rate for base quality upland cotton, and (b) the Friday through Thursday average price quotation for

the lowest-priced U.S. growth as quoted for Middling (M) 1-3/32 inch cotton, C.I.F. northern Europe (U.S. Northern Europe price) exceeds the Northern Europe price. The maximum allowable adjustment is the difference between the U.S. Northern Europe price and the Northern Europe price.

Based on data for the week ending Sept. 5, a further adjustment to this week's calculated AWP may be made in accordance with this provision. The calculated AWP is 108.25 percent of the 1991 upland cotton base quality loan rate, and the U.S. Northern Europe price exceeds the Northern Europe price by 3.11 cents per pound. Below are the relevant calculations.

I.	Calculated AWP .....	54.96 cents per pound
	1991 Base Loan Rate .....	50.77 cents per pound
	AWP as a Percent of Loan Rate .....	108.25
II.	U.S. Northern Europe Price .....	74.50 cents per pound
	Northern Europe Price .....	-71.39 cents per pound
	Maximum Adjustment Allowed .....	3.11 cents per pound

Based on a consideration of the U.S. share of world exports, the current level of cotton export sales and cotton export shipments, and other relevant data, no further adjustment will be made to this week's calculated AWP.

Based on data for the week ending Sept. 5, the AWP for base quality upland cotton and the coarse count adjustment are determined as follows:

Adjusted World Price

Northern Europe Price ..... 71.39

Adjustments:

Average U.S. spot market location ..... 14.18

SLM 1-1/16 inch cotton ..... 1.90

Average U.S. location ..... 0.35

Sum of Adjustments .....-16.43

Calculated AWP .....-54.96

Further AWP adjustment .....- 0

ADJUSTED WORLD PRICE ..... 54.96 cents/lb.

Coarse Count Adjustment

Northern Europe Price ..... 71.39

Northern Europe Coarse Count Price ..... -70.15

1.24

Adjustment to SLM 1-1/32 inch cotton ..... -4.20

-2.96

COARSE COUNT ADJUSTMENT ..... 0 cents/lb.

Since the AWP is above the 1989, 1990 and 1991 crop base quality loan rates of 50.00, 50.27 and 50.77 cents per pound, respectively, the loan repayment rates for the 1989, 1990 and 1991 crops of upland cotton during this period are equal to the respective loan rates, adjusted for the specific quality and location, plus any applicable interest and charges.

The AWP will continue to be used to determine the value of upland cotton that is obtained in exchange for commodity certificates. Because the AWP in effect is above the established loan rate, loan deficiency payments are not available for 1991-crop upland cotton during this period.

Based on data for the week ending Sept. 5, the U.S. Northern Europe price exceeded the Northern Europe price by more than 1.25 cents per pound for the fourth consecutive week, resulting in a certificate payment rate of 1.86 cents per pound. Relevant data used in determining the user marketing certificate payment rate are summarized below:

Week	For the Friday through Thursday Period Ending	U.S.	Northern	Northern	(1) Minus (2)	Certificate Payment Rate <sup>1</sup>
		Europe Price (1)	Europe Price (2)			
..... cents per pound .....						
1	Aug. 15, 1991	74.85	72.91	1.94		
2	Aug. 22, 1991	74.20	72.17	2.03		
3	Aug. 29, 1991	74.19	71.78	2.41		1.16
4	Sept. 5, 1991	74.50	71.39	3.11		1.86

<sup>1</sup>(1) minus (2) for Week 4 minus 1.25 cents.

The next announcement of the AWP, coarse count adjustment and user marketing certificate payment rate will be made on Thursday, Sept. 12.

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## **U.S. MILK PRICES CONTINUE TO RISE**

WASHINGTON, Sept. 5—The U.S. Department of Agriculture reported today that the Minnesota-Wisconsin (M-W) price of manufacturing grade milk rose sharply during August, the fifth straight monthly increase.

Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for Economics Bruce Gardner said the M-W price averaged \$11.50 per hundredweight during August (3.5 percent milkfat), compared with \$10.96 during July.

The August price is 15 percent above the marketing year low of \$10.02 per hundredweight during March. The M-W price is a monthly estimate of the average price paid to milk producers by processors in the two states for Grade B milk. The M-W price is used to determine minimum class prices in all Federal milk marketing orders.

“Many observers have projected seasonal milk price increases during the last half of 1991,” Gardner said, “but the August rise indicates prices above these expectations.” On Aug. 30, USDA reported the average price received for all milk by U.S. milk producers (the all-milk price) averaged \$12.10 per hundredweight during August, up from \$11.80 during July and the marketing year low of \$11.30 during April.

The continued milk price increases have resulted from administrative actions and market factors, Gardner said. In May, Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan announced a series of interim actions to strengthen dairy prices. In addition, U.S. producers have reduced milk production.

Roger Runningen (202) 447-4623

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## **COMPOSTED SEWAGE SLUDGE MAY HELP PREVENT LEAD POISONING**

WASHINGTON, Sept. 9—A recycled waste product—composted sewage might help prevent lead poisoning in children who play in and

then eat lead-contaminated soil, as well as people who eat crops grown in leadcontaminated home gardens.

According to U.S. Department of Agriculture agronomist Rufus Chaney who is studying soil lead in Baltimore and other cities at the request of the Environmental Protection Agency, soil outside a person's residence, soil tracked or blown inside that residence, and soil in urban gardens can each contain dangerously high levels of lead.

Chaney, with USDA's Agricultural Research Service, said soil lead levels range from near zero to more than 25 grams per kilogram—or 25,000 parts per million (ppm). It's not uncommon for urban soils to contain 1,000 to 5,000 or more ppm of lead, as did several of the urban gardens Chaney studied in Baltimore. Soil with more than 500 ppm of lead is considered hazardous waste by EPA.

"Lead never leaves soil. It doesn't decay," said Chaney, who studied soils outside residences and in urban gardens, as well as other sources of lead in the urban environment. "You can dig soil up 50 or 100 years from now and the lead will still be there."

"The only hope is that the lead will move down into deeper soil."

Chaney is working with EPA to find out if steps taken to clean lead from soil correlate with lower blood-lead levels in children. The study is being done in Baltimore, Boston, and Cincinnati.

He said the potential for lead poisoning "is much greater from eating soil in a lead-contaminated garden than from eating leafy vegetables grown in that garden."

However, in his Beltsville, Md., lab, Chaney found that when composted sludge is mixed with contaminated soil it "binds" lead and prevents its absorption by plants. For example, this mixture lowered lead uptake in lettuce—a vegetable that is particularly vulnerable to soil lead uptake—by as much as 64 percent, compared to lettuce grown in soil without composted sludge.

As a second example, the mixture lowered lead uptake in spinach by over 50 percent, compared to spinach grown in soil without composted sludge. Additional crops such as carrots and red beets showed similar results.

He said lead concentrates in leaves of vegetables such as lettuce, spinach, and turnip and beet greens. "For that reason, people should avoid eating leafy vegetables grown in garden soils containing more than 500 ppm of lead—like that which might be found in greater than 25 percent of urban gardens," he said.

He added that fruits and grains such as tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, sweet corn, and beans don't absorb lead—even when grown in highly contaminated soils.

Chaney was among the first to recognize that eating soil could contribute to lead poisoning in children. This was based on lead levels in rats that were fed urban soils, as part of experiments he began conducting in 1978.

In turn he is now collaborating with researchers at Xavier University's College of Pharmacy in New Orleans to see if adding composted sludge to soil reduces lead absorption by rats.

"We want to see if lead will stay in the sludge-treated soil instead of moving into the blood as it passes through the intestinal tract of rats which ate the contaminated soil," he said. "These findings should give us some clue as to whether adding composted sludge to soil can reduce lead absorption by children who have eaten contaminated soil mixed with sludge."

"In addition, this may be a rare opportunity to have one waste product neutralize another problem," he said. "Of course, the sludge used must have only low levels of lead, cadmium, and other metals."

According to Chaney, soil lead is the past coming back to haunt America. It comes from years of driving cars on lead-based gasoline and painting homes with lead-based paint. Most lead-based paint was replaced with safe titanium paint in the 1950s. Lead-based paint was finally banned in the U.S. in 1978.

Over the years, paint chips can fall on the ground or be pulverized into an airborne dust. This dust, along with contaminated dust from auto exhausts can settle onto the roofs and exterior walls of residences that were never painted with lead-based paint. When it rains, this lead dust is washed off, leaving the soil near the residence potentially with the highest levels.

And what's outside the residence can come inside. "Dust is very often nothing more than dirt tracked in," Chaney said.

Contaminated soil particles in the air add to the problem of dust from flaking paint. It can settle on surfaces where food is prepared as well as where children play.

He said other scientists' studies point out the danger to children: Half the 1-to-4-year-olds in this country eat 9 to 40 or even more milligrams of soil a day. A small percentage eats 1,000 to 10,000 milligrams of soil a day. If soil is contaminated with 1,000 ppm of lead, a youngster eating

100 milligrams of soil daily would get about 100 micrograms (millionths of a gram) of lead a day.

By contrast, the average 2-year-old gets only about 2.5 micrograms of lead a day from eating leafy vegetables grown in soils containing 1,000 ppm lead, Chaney said.

“It’s ironic because I began the sludge research concerned about the dangers of lead and other metals in the sludge itself. I never expected sludge could make soil safer,” Chaney said.

Chaney offered the following suggestions on how to reduce lead concentration—as well as absorbability of lead—in soils around residences and in vegetables in home gardens:

- Before choosing a garden spot, have the soil tested particularly in older, urban areas. Don’t plant leafy vegetables in soil which contains 500 or more ppm of lead. USDA’s Extension Service offers lead testing of soil at many state university labs. County Extension agents might also be able to help people find private labs that will do the testing. Or look up “Laboratories, Testing” in the yellow pages of your telephone book.
- If your soil has high lead levels (greater than 500 ppm), you could replace all the topsoil around your residence. Short of that, bind the lead in that soil with composted sludge. Or cover the bare soil that surrounds the residence by using such coverings as grass, flowers or other vegetation, or—as a last resort—wood chips, gravel, cement, or a wood deck.
- Fertilizer helps somewhat in reducing concentrations of lead in crops because phosphorus-deficient plants have more lead in their leaves. Adding leaf or garden compost or manure can also help a little.
- Adding a low-metal sewage sludge compost can substantially decrease lead uptake in plants. Such compost is sold by many municipal wastewater treatment plants. Again, Extension agents may have advice on locating a safe sludge.
- Keep soil pH above 6.5, which is more alkaline. Acid soils—which have a pH level below 6.0—increase lead uptake in plants.
- Trim and wash produce: Remove the lower outermost leaves, the ones that touch the soil or have soil splashed up on them. Wash lettuce and cut it on a clean cutting board.

Don Comis (301) 344-2773

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## RESEARCH DEVELOPS NEW RECIPE FOR REFORMING INDUSTRIAL FATTY ACIDS

WASHINGTON, Sept. 10—Take a few cups of fatty acids, add a dash of clay, cook in a pressure cooker for 3 to 4 hours, and presto—you've got "estolides."

This "recipe" cooked up by U.S. Department of Agriculture scientists converts the fatty acids from vegetable oils into compounds that are a combination of two or more fatty acids.

These compounds, called estolides, might someday be used in making lubricants, printing inks, cosmetics, and softeners of plastic.

The scientists, with USDA's Agricultural Research Service, are patenting the procedure to make estolides from fatty acids derived from vegetable oils.

Prior to the development of this procedure, this type of estolides existed in some form in nature, but it was not being manufactured.

"We feel this is a very unique procedure that will produce new materials for industrial processing," said Robert Kleiman, head of the New Crops Research unit at the National Center for Agricultural Utilization Research in Peoria, Ill.

Kleiman, fellow ARS chemist Selim M. Erhan, and former ARS researcher Douglas A. Burg initially were seeking new uses for meadowfoam, an oilseed crop grown in the Pacific Northwest. Oil from meadowfoam is used on a limited basis in manufacturing cosmetics.

The scientists subsequently discovered that fatty acids in meadowfoam oil will form estolides when subjected to pressure ranging from 200 to 1,000 pounds per square inch and temperatures of about 490 degrees F. The fatty acids are put into a chamber, pressurized, and heated. After shaking or stirring for three to four hours, the mixture is cooled and the pressure is released.

Distillation then separates the estolides from its residual components.

Kleiman said that if the estolides are subsequently split, they produce a particular fatty acid known as a "hydroxy fatty acid." Such fatty acids are structurally different from those now found in imported castor oil. However, they may have industrial uses similar to hydroxy fatty acids in castor oil.

He said the new process also can produce estolides from fatty acids in other vegetable oils such as soybean, corn, or sunflower oil.

In addition to providing a domestic source of hydroxy fatty acids, the manufacture of estolides could expand the \$68 million dimer acid industry by enabling processors to produce both dimer acids and estolides. Dimer acids are made from vegetable oils and are used in the production of adhesives, printing inks, no-drip paints and other products. Approximately 15,000 tons of dimer acids are produced annually in the United States.

Processing plants that already make dimer acids or other materials similar to estolides should be able to use the new procedure, Kleiman said. However, the new process developed by ARS scientists does not yet produce estolides economically.

“The best yields we’ve gotten have given us 15 percent of the starting materials. This is a relatively low return—but it’s workable,” said Kleiman, adding that he is optimistic yields will improve with additional research. “We’re not really sure yet what the yield will have to be to make the process cost-effective.”

The cost of using the new processing method will depend upon the type of vegetable oil used, Kleiman said. He and his fellow Peoria scientists hope to enter a licensing or cooperative research agreement with one or more private companies to further the research.

In addition to using vegetable oils to create estolides and, in turn, hydroxy fatty acids, some oils, such as meadowfoam and high oleic sunflower oil, can be used directly in the procedure. The costs are comparable to those of producing dimer acids. However, soybean and rapeseed oils would cost more to convert to estolides because additional processing is necessary before the estolides can be made.

Marcie Gerrietts (309) 685-4011

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## **USDA DECLARES HAWAII AND NEW MEXICO FREE OF SWINE BRUCELLOSIS**

WASHINGTON, Sept. 10—The U.S. Department of Agriculture has declared Hawaii and New Mexico free of swine brucellosis.

The action frees swine producers in the two states from having to test breeding animals for brucellosis prior to moving them to other states, according to Lonnie King, deputy administrator for veterinary services in USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

As a result of a state-federal brucellosis eradication campaign, 38 states, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands now have been certified free of the disease. King said the cooperative program targets the disease's complete eradication from the United States within the next five years.

Swine brucellosis is an infectious bacterial disease that causes pregnant sows to abort or give birth to weak piglets. It is caused by the bacterium *Brucella suis*, which can be transmitted to humans where it causes a severe debilitating disease with flu-like symptoms. Human infection generally occurs only in those who handle infected pigs or their carcasses.

The change in status for Hawaii and New Mexico is being published as an interim rule in today's Federal Register and is effective today.

Comments will be accepted if they are received on or before Nov. 12.

An original and three copies of written comments referring to Docket 91-114 should be sent to Chief, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, USDA, Rm. 804 Federal Building, 6505 Belcrest Road, Hyattsville, Md. 20782. Comments may be inspected at USDA, Rm. 1141-South, 14th St. and Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C., between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays.

Alan Zagier (301) 436-7255

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## **FGIS OFFERS DEOXYNIVALENOL (VOMITOXIN) TESTING FOR WHEAT**

WASHINGTON, Sept. 10—The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Federal Grain Inspection Service today began offering a testing service, upon request, for deoxynivalenol (DON) in wheat. DON is more commonly known as vomitoxin.

DON is a naturally occurring mycotoxin, a toxic substance produced by a fusarium mold that also causes scab damage in wheat.

FGIS Administrator John Foltz said the agency is implementing the new testing service because DON has recently been found in some wheat. The presence of vomitoxin is associated with excessive rain and cool temperatures prior to harvest.

Testing will be conducted at the FGIS Commodity Testing Laboratory in Beltsville, Md., using thin-layer chromatography, a method approved

by the Association of Official Analytical Chemists for the quantitative detection of DON in wheat.

Steve Tanner (202) 382-0216

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## **USDA REQUESTS COMMENTS ON 1992 UPLAND COTTON PROGRAM**

WASHINGTON, Sept. 11—The U.S. Department of Agriculture is requesting comments on the 1992 upland cotton acreage reduction program, according to Keith Bjerke, executive vice president of USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation.

Bjerke said comments are requested on whether the upland cotton acreage reduction for 1992 should be 5, 10 or 15 percent. The following table shows the estimated impacts of 3 options:

Further details appear in the Sept. 13 Federal Register.

Submit comments by Oct. 16 to: Director, Commodity Analysis Division, USDA/ASCS, P.O. Box 2415, Washington, D.C. 20013.

All comments will be available for public inspection in Room 3760-S of USDA's South Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. during regular business hours. A regulatory impact analysis on the 1992 upland cotton program may be obtained from the Commodity Analysis Division, USDA/ASCS, Room 3760-S, P.O. Box 2415, Washington, D.C. 20013; telephone (202) 447-7954.

Bruce Merkle (20) 447-8206

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# Backgrounder

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## **PROPOSAL TO REVISE THE FEDERAL WETLANDS MANUAL**

On August 9, the administration of President George Bush proposed changes in the Federal Manual for the Identification and Delineation of Wetlands to improve consistency and logic in federal rules that protect the nation's wetlands from environmental degradation. This backgrounder compares current federal rules on wetland identification that affect U.S. farmers with key proposed changes. It also recounts the reasons that U.S. Department of Agriculture policymakers strongly support adoption of the new regulations.

**BACKGROUND**—The wetlands manual prescribes criteria for federal conservation officers to follow in designating land on farms and elsewhere wetland. Once such a designation is made, further development or draining of the wetland area is limited by regulations under the Clean Water Act of 1972 and the 1985 and 1990 Farm Bills. The manual is written by USDA's Soil Conservation Service, the Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Department of the Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Since the original manual was issued in January 1989, USDA has received many criticisms of its provisions from farmers, who claimed the manual was too broad, imprecise, subject to conflicting interpretations among federal agencies, and weighted on the side of declaring questionable areas to be wetlands. Many farmers also objected that the original manual's provision were not subject to public comment or tested in the field before publication in final form.

**OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED CHANGES**— Revisions to the manual were written in part to address these many objections. The revised manual would:

—more clearly define the specific conditions that must exist for an area to be declared a wetland;

- require federal agencies to establish that these conditions actually exist on each parcel of land designated a wetland;
- make the rules on wetland designation consistent among federal agencies;
- open the proposed changes to comments by farmers and other members of the public;
- and establish an expert committee to review comments and conduct a field study of the revised rules before they are issued in final form.

## **COMPARISON OF PROPOSED CHANGES TO 1989 RULES**

**Duration of Inundation or Saturation—** The revised manual would require that a wetland be inundated for 15 or more consecutive days during the growing season or saturated to the surface for 21 or more consecutive days during the growing season. The 1989 manual required that a wetland be inundated or saturated for only one week during the growing season.

**Depth of Saturation—** The revised manual would change the definition of surface saturation. Under the new rules, soil would be considered saturated to the surface if water can be squeezed or shaken from a handful of surface soil. The 1989 rules stipulated that saturation to the surface occurs when the water table is within 6 to 18 inches from the surface depending on the soil type.

**Criteria of Wetland Status—** The revised manual would require independent physical indications of all three wetland criteria—the presence of appropriate hydrology, saturated soil and water-loving vegetation—for an area to be designated a wetland (unless the area is a disturbed wetland or a specifically prescribed exception such as a prairie pothole or other special wetland type that may fail to meet the vegetation criterion).

The 1989 manual allowed the assumption that all three criteria were met in certain instances based on the presence of only two of the three criteria. For example, in potential wetland areas which have not been hydrologically disturbed, the 1989 rules allowed the assumption that wetland hydrology would exist part of the growing season, even if it is not evident at the time based on the presence of water-loving vegetation or saturated soil.

**Indicators of Wetland Hydrology—** Under the 1989 manual, the presence of saturated soil could alone be used as an indication of the existence of wetland hydrology. Also, the list of wetland hydrology included “strong” and “weak” indicators, each type of which alone could be used to meet the wetland hydrology criterion.

Under the revised manual, saturated soil could not be used as the sole indicator of wetland hydrology. The list of hydrology indicators is separated into primary and secondary indicators under the proposed revisions. Primary indicators—standing water or a water table at the surface for the minimum amount of time during the growing season—may alone indicate the presence of wetland hydrology under the revised rules. However, secondary indicators—such as regional hydrology maps, hydraulic gauge data, national wetland inventory maps and aerial photographs—can be used only as corroborative evidence that an area possesses wetland hydrology under these revisions. The revised manual also would remove water-stained leaves trunks, or stems as indicators of hydrology.

**Burden of Proof—** As a result of these proposed changes, federal agencies would be required to adequately document that all three wetland criteria are met before determining that a land parcel is a wetland. Under the 1989 rules, for example, wetlands were identified on the basis of soil maps with assumptions made about wetland vegetation or hydrology. The revised manual would ensure that parcels designated wetlands meet the official criteria before the designation is made.

**Definition of Growing Season—** Under the revised manual’s guidelines growing seasons would be based on frost dates, and would extend from three weeks before the average last frost date in the Spring to three weeks after the average first frost date in the Fall. Historical frost dates are well known in most U.S. counties, so growing seasons calculated under the proposed revision would accurately reflect local conditions.

The 1989 manual established an area’s growing season based on soil temperature. Under this rule, the growing season extends from the beginning to the end of the biologic growing season when soil temperatures at 20 inches below the surface are above 41 degrees F. This approach established growingseason zones which were inaccurately uniform over large geographical areas.

**USDA SUPPORT FOR REVISED MANUAL**—USDA policymakers recognize the ecological value of wetlands in controlling floodwaters, trapping sediment, recharging underground water supplies, filtering pollution, reducing soil erosion, providing habitat for fish and wildlife, and forming an important link in the biological food chain.

But USDA policymakers also recognize that wetland decisions are vital to the management of many farming operations, and that legal requirements of federal wetland laws significantly limit the property rights of farmers and others whose land includes areas federally designated as wetland. These rights are set aside as required by law to afford ecological benefits for the nation as a whole. USDA believes that in return, farmers deserve clear, consistent, and fair regulations.

Diana Morse (202) 447-4772  
Issued: Sept. 6, 1991